

To the Members of the California State Senate:

Senate Bill X5 1 and Senate Bill X5 4 set forth historic and sweeping reforms that will change the culture of education in California for the good of children and parents across our state. Together, these two bills demonstrate that California is ready to implement bold reforms in education and compete nationally in the federal Race to the Top initiative.

While my original proposal, which provided students trapped in low-performing schools the opportunity to attend a higher-achieving school, was more encompassing, this package reflects a compromise that gained the approval of both houses of the Legislature. It allows families to make choices that are not limited by the boundaries of their own zip code. Most importantly, it begins the work of changing the culture at the local level to allow parents a greater role in their children's education.

Empowering parents is a key factor in improving low-performing schools. My original proposal provided a petition component that would allow parents to force a change in a school's operation if they determined it failed to meet the academic needs of its students. A limited version of my proposal was adopted in this package, a first step I applaud.

Additionally, I expect that the Standards Commission, created in this bill to make recommendations to the State Board of Education, will develop new standards with the goal of ensuring that they meet or exceed California's existing high standards.

This legislation reflects a historic and visionary step in improving California's schools. However, this critical effort should not end here. Much remains to be done to ensure that our children have the educational system they need and deserve.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger